

Running head: SPORTS CULTURE IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS



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The Value of Sports in American Curriculum

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The Value of Sports in American Curriculum

In the article *The Case against High-School Sports* by Amanda Ripley, high schools are the main social institutions that play the significant role. The author compares American sporting culture in schools to the sporting culture in Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Shanghai and is able to demonstrate why Americans are beaten academically by these nations that do not prioritize sports. She gives example of Jenny who had moved from South Korea to study in America. Jenny experienced a cultural shock when she realized that American schools had well maintained and costly fields unlike her home country where kids played on dirty fields (Ripley, 2013). "Sports are a big deal here," she said (Ripley, 2013). Her ethnocentrism led to the culture shock, because she tried to understand American sports culture in relation to her own back in South Korea. Apart from high schools, the National Collegiate Athletic Association is another social institution that plays a role in the article. The association emerged in the early 20th century to try and professionalize the football game that had become rough resulting to injuries of players (Ripley, 2013).

The article highlights the American values of sports in schools. It helps to point out why America ranks position 31st in academics, while nations such as Singapore and South Korea rank at the top (Ripley, 2013). One question that arises about our society from reading the article is when will our schools be willing to change the century-old believe in sports? Another question is whether America will ever beat nations such as Singapore academically owing to the fact that these countries have already moved away from using sports as a motivation tool for their students. The article makes me think that our society believes much in the value of sports in improving academic performance, while there is research showing contrary evidence. For example, Andreas Schleicher has visited numerous schools around the world and has confirmed that class engagement is better improved by involving learners in a

cognitive challenge and not sports (Ripley, 2013). “If you offer boring and poor math instruction and try to compensate that with interesting sport activities, you may get students interested in sports but I doubt it will do much good to their engagement with school” (Ripley, 2013). American principals are, however, willing to fight for retention of sports in schools rather than have them side-lined, because they view sports as a norm in the society that should not be tampered with (Ripley, 2013). American principals have not devised a new way to motivate and engage students, whilst the rest of the world has moved on and developed new ways to engage students.

In a different article titled *Does Competitive Sport in School Do More Harm than Good?* by Matthew Jenkin, I have found out that competitive aspect of sports prepares learners for adult life. Competitive sports help learners to contain their temper, because they expect either a win or a loss and none of those is guaranteed (Jenkin, 2015). Participants usually learn that their expectations do not always have to be met and thus develop an attitude in live of accepting and dealing with the outcome no matter the direction it takes. The article, however, supports the Americans believe that sports improve class engagement. The writer gives the example of Britain’s Mo Farah, where his physical education teacher, Alan Watkinson, says that his involvement in sports also helped Farah academically (Jenkin, 2015). Though these two benefits can be said to be true, the act of giving sports priority over academics in the American society is what raises concern on whether the trade-off is worthy.

References

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Discussion Questions

1. Is America justified to prioritize sports over academic performance? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Why do you think that our society has continued to glorify sports over the years even after being surpassed by other nations academically?
3. What are the pointers that the American sport culture has more benefits than harm to our learners?
4. What is more important to our society between academic superiority and physical wellness? Why?

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